Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended) A method for controlling the distribution of expiring free postage value in a PC postage system, which free postage value is provided free of charge by a third party to a user and will expire after a time period has elapsed if such free postage is not used up by the user, as opposed to postage value owned by the user which will not expire after a period of time has elapsed, the method comprising the steps of:

the third party providing by a computer server free postage value in a first portion and a second portion and the computer server transferring [[a]] the first portion of said expiring free postage value provided by the third party to a user's postage meter where it is available for use by the user;

storing [[a]] in the computer server the second portion of said expiring free postage value in a free postage account for the user at a third party computer server, which second portion of said expiring free postage value remains unavailable for use by the user unless and until part of or all of the second portion is transferred by the computer server to the user's postage meter during a time period set by the third party; and

resetting a after the time period set by the third party has elapsed, indicating to the computer server that the untransferred balance of said second portion of said expiring free postage account value held for the user in the third party computer server is no longer useable. upon expiration of said free postage value after the time period has elapsed.

2. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of establishing a minimum threshold for said postage meter and transferring a block of second portion of free postage value from said free postage account at the third party computer server to

said <u>user's</u> postage meter when <u>the</u> balance of said postage meter is less than or equal to said
threshold.

3.   (Currently amended)   The method of claim 2 further comprising the step
of decrementing said free postage account in accordance with said block of <u>the second portion of</u>
<u>free</u> transferred postage.

4.   (Previously presented)   The method of claim 1 further comprising the step
of storing purchased postage value in an available postage account.

5.   (Previously presented)   The method of claim 4 further comprising the step
of utilizing said expiring free postage value before said purchased postage value.

6.   (Previously presented)   The method of claim 1 further comprising the step
of displaying a sum of total expiring free postage value and purchased postage value in an
available postage field.

7.   (Original)   The method of claim 6 further comprising the step of decrementing
said available postage field in accordance with a print transaction.

8.   (Previously presented)   The method of claim 7 further comprising the step
of utilizing said expiring free postage value before said purchased postage value.

9.   (Previously presented)   The method of claim 1 further comprising notifying
user upon expiration of said free postage value.

10.   (Previously presented)   The method of claim 1 further comprising the step
of storing purchased postage value and balance of the postage meter in a descending register.

11.   (Currently amended)   The method of claim 10 further comprising the step of decrementing the descending register in accordance with a print transaction.

12.   (Currently amended)   The method of claim 1 further comprising the [[steps]] step of determining whether postage meter balance is equal to or greater than a predetermined threshold.

13.   (Currently amended)   The method of claim 12 further comprising the step of transferring a block of the second portion of free postage value from said free postage account to said postage meter in accordance with said threshold determination.

14.   (Previously presented)   The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of determining validity of said expiring free postage value in response to receipt of a print postage request and wherein said free postage account is reset in accordance with said validity determination.

15.   (Previously presented)   The method of claim 14 further comprising the step of determining whether balance of said free postage value is equal to or greater than a value of requested postage and transferring a block of free postage value from said free postage account to said postage meter in accordance with the amount determination.

16.   (Original)   The method of claim 15 further comprising the step of decrementing said free postage account in accordance with the transferred postage.

17.   (Original)   The method of claim 15 further comprising the step of generating print image in accordance with said amount determination.

18.   (Currently amended)   The method of claim 14 further comprising the step of determining whether <u>a</u> balance of total purchased postage value and free postage value is equal to or greater than <u>the</u> value of requested postage.

19.   (Original)   The method of claim 18 further comprising the step of generating error message in accordance with said amount determination.

20.   (Original)   The method of claim 18 further comprising the step of generating print image in accordance with said amount determination.

21.   (Currently amended)   A method for controlling the distribution of expiring free postage in a PC postage system, which free postage value is provided free of charge by a third party to a user and will expire after a time period has elapsed if such free postage is not used up by the user, as opposed to postage value owned by the user which will not expire after a period of time has elapsed, the method comprising the steps of:
        storing [[said]] <u>untransferred</u> expiring free postage value provided by the third party in a free postage account for the user at a third party <u>computer</u> server <u>wherein the untransferred expiring free postage value remains unavailable and subject to expiration if not transferred by the computer server to the user within a time period set by the third party</u>;
        transferring <u>by the computer server</u> a portion of said expiring free postage value from said free postage account to a user's postage meter in accordance with a print postage request <u>made before expiration of the time period</u>; and
        resetting <u>an untransferred</u> [[a]] balance of said free postage account for the user in the third party <u>computer</u> server <s>upon expiration of said free postage value</s> after the time period has elapsed.

22.   (Previously presented)   The method of claim 21 further comprising the step of decrementing said free postage account in accordance with said transferred postage value.

23.   (Currently amended)   The method of claim 21 further comprising the step of displaying a sum of the expiring free postage value and purchased postage value in an available postage field.

24.   (Original)   The method of claim 23 further comprising the step of decrementing said available postage field in accordance with a print transaction.

25.   (Previously presented)   The method of claim 24 further comprising the step of utilizing said expiring free postage value before said purchased postage.

26.   (Previously presented)   The method of claim 21 further comprising the steps of determining the validity of said expiring free postage value in response to receipt of said print postage request, wherein said free postage account is reset in accordance with said validity determination.

27.   (Currently amended)   The method of claim 26 further comprising the step of determining whether the balance of the free postage account is equal to or greater than a value of requested postage and wherein the step of transferring a portion of the expiring free postage value to said postage meter comprises transferring a portion of the expiring free postage value in accordance with the amount determination.

28.   (Previously presented)   The method of claim 27 further comprising the step of decrementing said free postage account in accordance with the transferred postage value.

29.   (Original)   The method of claim 27 further comprising the step of generating print image in accordance with said amount determination.

30.　(Previously presented)　　The method of claim 26 further comprising the step of determining whether balance of total purchased postage value and free postage value is equal to or greater than value of requested postage.

31.　(Currently amended)　　The method of claim 30 further comprising the step of generating an error message in accordance with said amount determination.

32.　(Currently amended)　　The method of claim 30 further comprising the step of generating a print image in accordance with said amount determination.

33.　(Currently amended)　 A PC postage system that controls the distribution of expiring free postage value, which free postage value is provided free of charge by a third party to a user and will expire after a time period has elapsed if such free postage is not used up by the user, as opposed to postage value owned by the user which will not expire after a period of time has elapsed, the system[[,]] comprising:

means for storing expiring free postage value provided by a third party to a user in a free postage account for the user at a third party computer server, the expiring free postage value in the free postage account at the third party server remaining unavailable for use by the user unless and until part of or all of such expiring free postage value is transferred by the computer server to a user's postage meter, and such untransferred expiring free postage value being canceled by the computer server after a period of time set by the third party if has not been transferred to the user's postage meter;

means for transferring by the computer server a portion of said expiring free postage value from said free postage account to [[a]] the postage meter of the user in accordance with a print postage request if the period of time has not elapsed; and

means for resetting by the computer server to zero an untransferred [[a]] balance of said free postage account for the user in the third party server upon expiration of said free postage value after the time period has elapsed.

34.   (Previously presented)   The PC postage system of claim 33 further comprising means for decrementing said free postage account in accordance with said transferred postage value.

35.   (Previously presented)   The PC postage system of claim 33 further comprising means for displaying sum of the expiring free postage value and purchased postage value in an available postage field.

36.   (Original)   PC postage system of claim 35 further comprising means for decrementing said available postage field in accordance with a print transaction.

37.   (Previously presented)   The PC postage system of claim 33 further comprising means for determining validity of said expiring free postage value in response to receipt of said print postage request, wherein said free postage account is reset in accordance with said validity determination.

38.   (Currently amended)   A method of managing free postage in a computer postage system, which free postage is provided free of charge by a third party to a user and will expire after a time period has elapsed if such free postage is not used up by the user, as opposed to postage value owned by the user which will not expire after a period of time has elapsed, the method comprising:

generating by a computer server an account to track free postage value separate from purchased postage value, which account is maintained by a third party in the computer server;

receiving at the computer server a request to print postage by a user's computer;

~~checking for free postage value availability in the account;~~

the computer server checking for expiration of free postage value in the account; and

~~setting a balance of the account to zero when the free postage value has expired after the~~ ~~time period has elapsed~~ after a time period set by the third party has elapsed, indicating to the

computer server that the untransferred balance of said second portion of said expiring free postage value held for the user in the third party computer server is no longer useable.

39.   (Previously presented)   The method of managing free postage in a computer postage system of claim 38, further comprising:

applying available free postage value to the request to print postage if free postage value is available; and

applying purchased postage to the request to print postage if free postage value is not available.